



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE

BY REAR-ADMIRAL COLBY N. CHESTER, U.S.N.,

Washington, D. C.

The Monroe Doctrine is the cardinal principle of the foreign policy of the United States. It has been so construed for nearly one hundred years of our national history, and it so remains today, in spite of some statements that have been made to the contrary. "It is," as Jefferson said, "the offspring of the American revolution and the most momentous question offered to my contemplation since the Independence." When promulgating the doctrine as the basis of our foreign policy, President Monroe said in his message to Congress, December 2, 1823:

It is impossible that the allied powers (of Europe) should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness, nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. . . . We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those Powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.

Two distinct and far reaching principles are laid down in the Monroe Doctrine. The first is the principle of "self-defense." Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and it is the first law of nations. In the case of the United States the national defense required, when the doctrine was enunciated, that the country should hold a protectorate throughout the entire western continent. The second principle is that South American republics, which followed our lead in declaring their independence, should have our protection in maintaining this doctrine for themselves. As Secretary Bayard once said: "The United States proclaimed themselves the protector of the western world in which she was the strongest Power," as "it was manifest," said his successor Mr. Olney, "that it was the only power on this hemisphere capable of enforcing the doctrine."

The first principle of the Monroe Doctrine—self-preservation—is axiomatic and immutable, and all other considerations must give

way to it. The second principle, like the constitution of a country, is amenable to changes or amendments that will bring it into accord with new conditions that may arise in the country. The question now is, therefore, do the same conditions prevail on the western continent today, that existed at the time President Monroe sent his message to Congress in 1823?

There have been so many different interpretations placed upon the Monroe Doctrine, by theorists and others, who know but little of its practical applications, that it is necessary to recall a little of its history in order to obtain a clear understanding of the subject. In the early twenties of the last century, the whole of Europe became alarmed at the unsettled political outlook caused by the American and French revolutions, which had shaken every throne on the continent, and bid fair to undermine monarchical government. Three of the great powers, Russia, Prussia and France (once again a kingdom), then formed what is known as the "Holy Alliance," on account of their common religious affiliation, for the purpose of staying the tide of freedom which threatened to overwhelm them. They then prepared to recapture the South and Central American republics, which had recently severed their connection with Spain, and make them appendages to European monarchies. England was, at the time, the only constitutionally governed country in Europe, and fearing that the "balance of power" between the European states might again be disturbed by such a combination, she, with no desire to promote republican institutions, however, proposed an alliance with the United States. Naturally neither country could harmonize its views on such a matter, and no political combination was formed, but an understanding was reached that England would not interfere with any action that America might take in the matter, thus giving her quasi approval to the message sent to Congress by President Monroe. Had it become necessary for the United States to take any overt action, at that time, in support of the Monroe Doctrine, this country would have had the moral support at least of the British government; but we now could hope for no aid from that country, and it is doubtful, indeed, if we could count on the approval of the Latin Americans, for whom, more than for ourselves, the doctrine was established, unless we harmonize some of our conflicting interests with them.

We should not fail to remember that the South American republics were in their infancy at the time the Monroe Doctrine was de-

clared, and were struggling for freedom against great odds. The United States proclaimed herself the protector of the western world as a matter of necessity, for without her aid the newly formed republics were helpless to battle against the great odds opposing them. The declaration of the Monroe Doctrine constituted, therefore, the most significant and decisive act towards guaranteeing the independence of all the American states that could have been devised. It produced the prompt recognition of the infant republics of South America by the English in 1823, and performed a service for Great Britain herself, of which Canning, the secretary of British foreign affairs, said: "I have brought out a new world in order to reëstablish the equilibrium of the old."

The question today, as far as our own national defense is concerned is, would it be a menace to interests centered so far away as the United States, if a European power, whose political and even religious aspirations may be the same as our own, should attempt to acquire territory in Argentina for instance? Such an assault would of course affect the interests of that country, but should the United States attempt to interfere in the matter unless asked by Argentina to aid her in throwing off the menace that assailed her? In case of assisting her we would become her ally, and probably one of many powers that might join with her in resisting the attack. It would seem, now that the continent is cut in twain by the construction of the Panama Canal neutralizing if not destroying the value of the old trade route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans via Cape Horn, that it would have no material effect on the "vital" interests of the United States, if a forcible attempt should be made by some European power to take one of the Argentine islands, situated at the extreme end of the continent. It is such changed conditions in the political relations with our South American brethren as this, that call for some new arrangements concerning the application of the Monroe Doctrine.

The principle that the affected country had paramount importance in its own affairs, unless they related to interests of a combination of which she was a part, was admitted by President Cleveland, in his celebrated message sent to Congress in 1895, commonly known as the "Venezuela case." In this message he stated (with some logical defect, I think, as far as Venezuela is concerned, as I shall endeavor to show later on), that if that country wished to *sell* any

portion of her territory to Great Britain, she had a perfect right to do so, and the United States had no right to interfere in the matter. This principle might apply to Argentina, at the present time, but such an act of selling a portion of her territory to a European state would not have been tolerated by the United States in 1823, under any circumstances; for Mr. Monroe then said in no uncertain words, that, "any attempt on their part (Europeans) to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere (would be) dangerous to our peace and safety."

On account of changed conditions in South America at the present time, there is a growing disposition on the part of some well informed Americans to limit the territorial extent to which the Monroe Doctrine should apply to the states that lie to the northward of the Amazon River; but such a limitation would be met with difficulties surpassing, in my opinion, those we should attempt to escape. By holding a protectorate over this restricted field only, we throw out of consideration all fellowship with the states to the southward of this line of demarcation, at once causing jealousies among the larger and more important of the South American republics, making them enemies of our defensive policy as selfish in its nature, and would most likely tend to add their moral support to our many commercial rivals and antagonists.

Leading statesmen of Brazil and other South American republics have declared that the Monroe Doctrine is discredited in the republics for whose benefit it was devised, not that they do not appreciate the good intentions of the United States, but they deny the right of this nation to appoint itself a guardian over their welfare. A doctrine founded upon the principle laid down by James Monroe, but giving the right of a protectorate to the powers in general and not to any country in particular, would be the ideal doctrine, in the belief of the people of Latin America.

As exemplifying the interests and aspirations of the South Americans in this connection I would relate the following:

On the 15th day of November, 1894, the fifth year of the foundation of the republic of Brazil, in the presence of the representatives of the principal American republics, including the United States, was laid in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the corner stone of a monument to American solidarity. Under this stone this official record lies: "The monument which will be erected on this spot in which this stone is laid, and which will symbolize the political union of

the different nations of the continent of Columbus, will be surmounted by the figure of James Monroe, author of the celebrated doctrine known by his name, which teaches that the nations of the new continent should unite for the purpose of preventing any undue interference of the nations of Europe in the internal affairs of America. Around the principal figure will be grouped the great national liberators of America, Washington, Jefferson, Juarez, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Bolivar, Jose Bonifacio and Benjamin Constant.'

I give you this incident and picture to study in contrast with another view depicting the scowling faces of many South Americans, from whom we are just now seeking commercial advantages, who spurn the foreign policy of the United States as it now stands, shun its commercial policy and belittle its domestic policy.

No, it were better in my opinion, to maintain the original jurisdiction of the Monroe Doctrine, but to recognize the fact that many of the twenty other American republics are no longer the weaklings they were when the policy was formulated, unable to defend themselves, but are now strong enough to share in the common defense of the continent, and act in consonance with them in maintaining the political rights of all.

We cannot, however, with propriety form an "alliance," for that word has been tabooed by an unwritten law of the land; but we can engage in an "entente," as foreigners call it, with the republics of South America that will give them a share in the responsibility of maintaining a policy which looks to the general good of all parties concerned.

Let us form then, not an alliance, but a "concert of action" after the principles of the Monroe Doctrine, similar to that established in Europe for the support of the doctrine known, there, as "the balance of power," which will show that all the states interested hold the same opinion regarding this doctrine. The moral effect of such an "entente" will be sufficient to stay the hand of any European nation, which may seek political annexation of American territory.

Aside from all considerations of our own self-interests, should the United States arrogate to herself the right to dictate a policy to the Latin-American states, which concerns their vital interests quite as much as our own, and which they resent as "bossism," now so universally abhorred, and which is belittling to their self-respect? Should we not, on the other hand, urge such powerful nations as Argentina, Brazil and Chile, and such others as may be useful to the cause, whenever they may be able to maintain stable governments

for a sufficient length of time to warrant it, to join with us in carrying out a general policy that is of mutual advantage to all republics on the continent? Call this part of our international policy by the name of the Monroe Doctrine, if you will, or by the term "America for the Americans," which will probably better please our confreres in the south, and at the same time be in accord with the general principle of the Monroe Doctrine.

Having made a compact with the South American republics as suggested the United States would be in a better position to devote attention to those matters which more especially affect her interests at home and in nearby states, where foreign aggression would jeopardize its vital interests.

There is a field, in which the interests of the United States as far as they relate to the basic principle of the Monroe Doctrine—"self-preservation"—are paramount, the protection of which cannot be shared with any other nation. This district comprises the countries lying contiguous or adjacent to our own, bordering on the Caribbean Sea or the Gulf of Mexico. The right of the United States to protect these countries from foreign aggression has been recognized in many ways by European countries, and the protection of "the father of republics" has been called for, and accepted so many times, as to establish this policy of the American government as an inalienable right. Notable instances were when the United States drove the French out of Mexico in 1865, and again when Spain was forced to give up her control in Cuba in 1898.

But aside from the fact that "self-protection," the basic principle of the Monroe Doctrine, compels the United States to take cognizance of the political affairs of Mexico, the Central and South American countries bordering on the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, we have assumed an obligation here in behalf of the interests of the whole world, that makes it imperative that these countries and seas shall be under the supervision of the United States, and we have also by treaty stipulated that no other country shall share in this protectorate. By the Hay-Pauncefote treaty, and the one recently made with Panama confirming its main features, the United States agrees, not only that the American "canal shall be free and open to the vessels of commerce and of war of all nations," but, guarantees that "the canal shall never be blockaded nor shall any right of war be exercised nor any hostility be committed within it.

The United States, however, shall be at liberty to maintain such military police along the canal as shall be necessary to protect it against lawlessness and disorder." This is a most sweeping assumption of responsibility, and the fact is the United States cannot protect the world's interests in the Panama Canal, without maintaining naval control of the seas that wash her shores on the south, as well as holding supervision of the foreign relations of the countries bordering on those seas.

The Caribbean Sea holds the base of the American fleet at Guantanamo, Cuba, and its advance base at Culebra, Porto Rico. In fact all the essentials for properly defending the canal lie in the region covered by its waters and those of the Gulf of Mexico. For all military purposes, therefore, these seas must be considered "The greater Panama Canal Zone," and the naval policy of the United States the only guide to perfect peace within their limits.

In defending the continental policy of "America for the Americans" the United States will have ample cause for keeping up an efficient navy, and to protect the seven thousand miles of coast line, including "the greater Panama Canal zone," she will need every ship that our non-military people will authorize to be constructed.

It has been well said that the Monroe Doctrine is as strong as the navy of the United States, and in view of the fact that our countrymen insist on maintaining but a small navy as compared with those that might be brought against it in combination, our people should avoid creating enemies, who might be tempted, in order to protect their own interests, to form an alliance with more power than we could bring to bear against them. In this connection I would recall the visit of Senator Root to South America in 1906, which, at the time, produced a friendly feeling between the North and South Americans, that lately has been greatly augmented by the forceful presence of his then chief, President Roosevelt, in that country. The sojourn of these two greatest of American statesmen in the South, has done more to cement the ties of fellowship between the two sections of the continent than anything that has occurred in the political lives of its people in many years. Dr. Edward Everett Hale once said of the first visit, that it was the most important event that had taken place in the history of the country during the first decade of the century, not excepting the peace of Portsmouth, and nothing has yet arisen in the second decade, which, I believe, will have greater influence in



strengthening this feeling than the expedition of Colonel Roosevelt to South America. As this last occasion took place at a significantly opportune moment, just before the opening of the Panama Canal, when we are about to inaugurate a new departure in our foreign trade relations, its commercial value is very important.

Let the United States follow up these auspicious visits of our countrymen to the Southland, and, in the words of the Hon. John Barrett, director of the Pan-American Union, "take advantage of the opening of the Panama Canal, to signalize formally, as it were, the beginning of a new Pan-American era in which the Monroe Doctrine, which represents the dictum of one government in the family of nations, shall evolve into a greater Pan-American doctrine, which shall represent the mutual interest and protection of all."

It is better to make friends than to build guns.